

CHAPTER 161

EDUCATION - PUBLIC SCHOOLS

HOUSE BILL 19-1187

BY REPRESENTATIVE(S) Coleman, Arndt, Bird, Buentello, Caraveo, Cutter, Duran, Esgar, Exum, Froelich, Galindo, Gonzales-Gutierrez, Gray, Hansen, Herod, Hooton, Jackson, Jaquez Lewis, Kennedy, Kipp, Lontine, McCluskie, McLachlan, Melton, Michaelson Jenet, Mullica, Roberts, Snyder, Titone, Valdez A., Weissman, Becker;
also SENATOR(S) Bridges, Crowder, Fenberg, Fields, Ginal, Moreno, Pettersen, Todd, Winter, Garcia.

AN ACT**CONCERNING INCREASING COMPLETION RATES OF APPLICATIONS FOR STUDENT FINANCIAL AID FOR HIGHER EDUCATION, AND, IN CONNECTION THEREWITH, MAKING AN APPROPRIATION.**

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:

SECTION 1. Legislative declaration. (1) The general assembly finds and declares that:

(a) During the 2015-16 academic year, Colorado students did not claim approximately fifty million dollars available through federal Pell grants because they did not complete or submit the free application for federal student aid;

(b) Low-income students are hurt the most by not completing or submitting the free application for federal student aid. Federal aid for higher education includes Pell grants, which are awarded to undergraduate students from low-income families. Unlike student loans, Pell grants generally do not have to be paid back. The maximum Pell grant amount for the 2018-19 academic year was over six thousand dollars. Pell grants are awarded based on financial need and are determined by completing and submitting the free application for federal student aid.

(c) Completing the free application for federal student aid allows all students to understand the financial aid package they are entitled to in the form of grants, loans, and work study programs. Without completing or submitting the free application for federal student aid, students might incorrectly believe that higher education is unaffordable when they might be entitled to a substantial amount of financial aid or low-interest loans that would make attending a higher education institution a smart investment.

Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material added to existing law; dashes through words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law and such material is not part of the act.

(d) If high school graduates knew how much money was available for higher education, especially students from low-income families that are eligible for Pell grants, then more students would choose to attend higher education institutions.

(2) The general assembly, therefore, further declares that it is in the best interest of the people of Colorado to educate and support students and families with the completion and submission of the free application for federal student aid and applications for state student aid to claim available federal and state money so that more Colorado students are able to attain higher education degrees.

SECTION 2. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-91-104, **amend** (5) as follows:

22-91-104. School counselor corps grant program - application - criteria - grant awards - rules - repeal. (5) (a) Subject to available appropriations, but not to exceed ten million dollars annually, the state board shall award grants to applying education providers pursuant to this section. The state board shall base the grant awards on the department's recommendations. Each grant has a term of four years beginning in the 2014-15 budget year. In making a grant award, the state board shall specify the amount of each grant.

(b) (I) IN ADDITION TO THE AMOUNT APPROPRIATED PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION (5)(a) OF THIS SECTION, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY SHALL APPROPRIATE TWO HUNDRED FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS EACH YEAR FOR THE 2019-20, 2020-21, AND 2021-22 FISCAL YEARS, FROM THE GENERAL FUND TO THE STATE BOARD. THE STATE BOARD SHALL DISTRIBUTE THE APPROPRIATION TO THE EDUCATION PROVIDERS THAT RECEIVE A GRANT FOR THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES:

(A) DEVELOPING AND DISTRIBUTING INFORMATION TO STUDENTS, FAMILIES, AND SCHOOL LEADERS REGARDING THE FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID AND APPLICATIONS FOR STATE STUDENT AID, AND THE BENEFITS OF COMPLETING THE FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID AND APPLICATIONS FOR STATE STUDENT AID;

(B) DEVELOPING AND DISTRIBUTING INFORMATION TO STUDENTS AND FAMILIES REGARDING THE STEPS REQUIRED TO COMPLETE THE FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID AND APPLICATIONS FOR STATE STUDENT AID;

(C) TRAINING SCHOOL COUNSELORS ON BEST PRACTICES TO SUPPORT STUDENTS AND FAMILIES WITH FILLING OUT THE FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID AND APPLICATIONS FOR STATE STUDENT AID, WITH AN EMPHASIS ON SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES WHO HAVE HISTORICALLY LOW COMPLETION RATES OF THE FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID AND APPLICATIONS FOR STATE STUDENT AID; AND

(D) ORGANIZING AND HOSTING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES TO MEET WITH STAKEHOLDERS WHO ASSIST IN COMPLETING THE FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID OR APPLICATIONS FOR STATE STUDENT AID.

(II) THIS SUBSECTION (5)(b) IS REPEALED, EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2023.

SECTION 3. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-91-105, **amend** (1)(e) and (1)(f); and **add** (1)(g) as follows:

22-91-105. Reporting - repeal. (1) Each education provider that receives a grant through the program shall report the following information to the department each year during the term of the grant:

(e) Information indicating an increase in the level of postsecondary preparation services provided to students at recipient schools, such as the use of individual career and academic plans or enrollment in pre-collegiate preparation programs or postsecondary or vocational preparation programs; ~~and~~

(f) (I) ~~Any additional information that the state board, by rule, may require.~~ A COMPARISON OF THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO COMPLETED THE FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID OR APPLICATIONS FOR STATE STUDENT AID FOR THE YEAR THE EDUCATION PROVIDER RECEIVES THE GRANT, IF AVAILABLE, AND THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO COMPLETED THE FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID OR APPLICATIONS FOR STATE STUDENT AID FOR EACH OF THE YEARS THE EDUCATION PROVIDER RECEIVES THE GRANT.

(II) THIS SUBSECTION (1)(f) IS REPEALED, EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2023.

(g) ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION THAT THE STATE BOARD, BY RULE, MAY REQUIRE.

SECTION 4. Appropriation. For the 2019-20 state fiscal year, \$250,000 is appropriated to the department of education. This appropriation is from the general fund. To implement this act, the department may use this appropriation for the school counselor corps grant program.

SECTION 5. Safety clause. The general assembly hereby finds, determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, and safety.

Approved: May 13, 2019